

*The following statement can be attributed to Robin Greenwood.
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Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for giving me a chance to testify today.

I'm here to speak in support of Matt's Safe Schools Law, because I think it would make a profound impact on my school, and schools across Michigan. I'm eighteen years old and a senior at Dearborn High school in Dearborn. All my years of middle and high school, have been marked with an inexcusable amount of bullying, and many students and staff members, seem to have no idea how to handle it.

I am gay and out at my high school, and nearly every day I experience people pushing me, or yelling threats and insults. People slam into me in the hall, pretending it's an accident. They yell that I don't belong there, and to get out before someone makes me. I know that teachers see and hear these things, but what I don't know is if their inaction is because they don't know what to do, or because they don't want to bother.

And I am not alone. Friends who have reported harassment to a counselor have gotten all kinds of unhelpful reactions, ranging from "I can't do anything about that," to "Oh well, you can just get over it," and even "You brought this upon yourself by caring what other people think." One friend had kids throwing volleyballs and screaming "Dyke!" while the gym teacher stood by seeing everything and doing nothing.

I know that some teachers want to help, but because the school board of this district is known to be somewhat conservative, they are afraid to help or speak up. I want to emphasize this point. We live in a conservative state, and many people harbor negative feelings toward minorities. But those same conservative values are keeping teachers and counselors from protecting us. Most kids, including me, just don't know who to turn to in the school. It would make such a difference to so many students to know that when someone was harassing them, they had a place to turn to. Please support House Bill 4162 today.

Thank you again for your time and listening to my testimony.

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